THE SENATE
LANSING, MICHIGAN

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April 11, 2005   (517) 373-5886

DEQ to issue ballast water report to Senate committee on Thursday per Sikkema's legislation

Report on ideas to protect Great Lakes was ordered in 2001

LANSING – The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality will issue a legislatively mandated report on ballast water to the Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee on Thursday, April 14, Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema announced today.

"Untreated ballast water is the primary reason aquatic nuisance species are threatening the health of the Great Lakes," said Sikkema, R-Wyoming. "The battle against untreated ballast water and aquatic nuisance species has been a priority of the Legislature for years, and will continue to be a priority until aquatic nuisance species stop invading our lakes."

In 2001, Sikkema's legislation requiring the DEQ to develop a ballast water reporting program and report back to the Legislature on the development of ballast water treatment methods was signed into law. Public Act 114 of 2001 set the example for states in the Great Lakes basin on how to curb the invasion of aquatic nuisance species.

"Michigan has taken the lead in protecting the Great Lakes from the growing threat posed by invasive species," said Sen. Patty Birkholz, chair of the Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee. "We must continue our commitment to ensure the health of our waters for future generations."

A federal court ruling was just issued directing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to stop exempting ship operators from discharging untreated ballast water containing invasive species.

"The procedures approved by the Legislature, coupled with the recent federal court actions, will help Michigan implement a strategic plan to protect the Great Lakes," Sikkema said. "We must do everything we can to defend Michigan's waters from these devastating invasions."

The committee meeting will be held at 3 p.m., in Room 110 of the Farnum Building.

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